

**Opening Statement of Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
For Hearing -- “Building Capacity to Protect US National Security:  
The FY 2010 International Affairs Budget”  
Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Lew, welcome to the Foreign Affairs Committee.

We appreciate having the benefit of your insights on the proposed Fiscal Year 2010 international affairs budget and on the prospects for comprehensive reform of our foreign assistance programs.

With respect to the budget request: it is ambitious in its magnitude, particularly at a time when we, as a nation, face great uncertainty about our economic prospects, particularly regarding our ability to take on further debt and pay it back with interest.

In line with the stated goal of doubling our foreign aid over five years, the request is almost exclusively composed of program increases.

We have not received any details or justification on how these increases are linked to specific criteria, premised on certain rationales, or resulting from any sort of review or evaluation.

Mr. Secretary could you elaborate upon how the budget increases were derived? Also, how did you determine the amounts, accounts and programs?

I have supported a great many assistance programs, including PEPFAR, food aid, aid for Haiti and Sudan, microfinance and child survival efforts, to name a few.

But we need a much better understanding as to why the international affairs budget for next fiscal year would be set for an increase of almost 9% over the 2009 level, which has already been increased by enacted and proposed supplemental funding.

The proposed increases would also be 25% over the Fiscal Year 2008 funding level.

Our 150 international affairs budget account has already grown from \$25.4 Billion in Fiscal Year 2002 to \$43 Billion in Fiscal Year 2008 – an increase of almost 70%.

The Congress is now working its way through the FY 2009 supplemental request, which already contains a significant amount of foreign aid funding.

Secretary Clinton testified before our Committee a few weeks ago that “she has challenged the department to reform and innovate and save taxpayer dollars” indicating a review was underway of State Department and foreign aid programs and operations.

However, the proposed funding increases appear to presuppose the conclusions of such a review and the budget submissions do not appear to reflect nor mention reforms or innovations resulting in savings.

The Chairman has urged all of us to consider ways we might reform our programs and structures and make them more efficient.

Answering that challenge, I would note for you three pieces of legislation that I have introduced with some of our colleagues on this Committee.

The first would create a joint, House-Senate temporary committee— to be truly bipartisan in structure and operation – that would bring together the leaderships of both houses and the various committees of jurisdiction over foreign aid programs and processes with the goal of reporting truly comprehensive reform legislation.

It is my belief that we cannot achieve sustainable reform without involving our Appropriations Committees, for example, and without doing it in a really bipartisan manner.

I have also introduced the “Foreign Assistance Partner Vetting System Act”, which would give the Secretary the authority to establish an organized system to “vet” our aid programs around the world to ensure that our funds do not inadvertently benefit supporters of terrorist organizations.

Finally, I have introduced a bill that seeks to build on efforts already underway to ensure the use of performance-based management in our foreign aid planning and funding.

That bill would also require the President to submit a national security strategy for our diplomacy and assistance at the same time that he submits the National Security Strategy that is already required under law.

I believe this approach is in keeping with the Secretary’s statement before our committee, where she reiterated the commitment she made during her Senate confirmation hearing, to: “pursue a policy that would enhance our nation’s security, advance our interests, and uphold our values.”

My bill—the “Strategy and Effectiveness of Foreign Policy and Assistance Act”—calls for the diplomacy and assistance strategy to describe how the organizational structures of our foreign affairs agencies and U. S. foreign aid programs, budget plans, personnel decisions, and public diplomacy fit into the overall National Security Strategy to advance the national security objectives and interests of the United States.

I would welcome yours and the Secretary’s review and consideration of these proposals.